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Letter dated 1 October 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith a letter dated 29 September 1997 from His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, addressed to you.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nicos AGATHOCLEOUS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Letter dated 29 September 1997 from the President of Cyprus addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 19 September 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to you and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council with regard to Turkey's views on the purchase by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus of a S-300 missile system (A/52/383-S/1997/732).

Beyond any doubt, the letter contains direct threats against Cyprus in case we proceed with the installation of the missiles and reflects the same aggressive attitude of Turkey against the Republic of Cyprus. These threats amount to a blatant violation of the peremptory norms of international law, the principles of the Charter of the United nations and in particular Article 2 (4), which prevents the threat or use of force, the numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Cyprus and the 1960 treaties establishing the Republic by which Turkey undertook to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus.

The letter, written and circulated on the eve of the United Nations-sponsored talks on 26 September between myself and Mr. Denktash to discuss security matters, reveals the true intentions of Turkey, which, once again, by its well-known tactics, attempts to deflect attention from the substantive issues of the Cyprus problem and the real cause that prevents your efforts in making progress towards finding a comprehensive, just and viable solution, i.e., the lack of political will of the Turkish side as reported by the then United Nations Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council of 30 May 1994 (S/1994/629). The same tactic was resorted to during the recent rounds of intercommunal talks at Troutbeck and Glion where, again, substantive progress was impeded, as the President of the Security Council stated on 20 August 1997, "by the attempt to bring in preconditions to the table by the other party and here of course I mean the Turkish Cypriots ...".

I wish to record with you my strongest protest at such illegal, unacceptable and aggressive threats, which if Turkey attempts to realize will certainly mean the end of peace.

I should also emphasize in this respect that, in view of this new provocative act, had I not agreed to do so, I would not have attended the talks on security matters last Friday, 26 September 1997. At the same time I wish to stress that, although I did honour my word to attend the security talks, in no circumstances would I accept to discuss matters relating to security under threat nor would I negotiate under duress.

It is not my intention to enter into a discussion with regard to the decision of my Government to buy the S-300 defensive missile system, because such a decision was made in the exercise of Cyprus' inalienable rights as a sovereign State, to self-defence and to decide on its armaments. These rights are not negotiable.

However, in view of the allegations contained in the said letter by which Turkey attempts to justify its unacceptable and unwarranted reaction to Cyprus' decision to purchase the missiles, I shall, once again, explain the reasons that made their purchase imperative.

The S-300 ground-to-air missile system is a purely defensive weapon, the technical characteristics of which give no reason to dispute its defensive nature.

The purchase of the system was made solely in order to meet the need to strengthen Cyprus' defence capability in view of the threat posed against it:

(a) By the continued Turkish military occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus;

(b) The increase, upgrading and modernization of the Turkish forces and their equipment. In this regard allow me to recall the assessment with regard to the occupied area of the then United Nations Secretary-General, who described it in his report to the Security Council of 7 June 1994 as "... one of the most highly militarized areas in the world in terms of the ratio between numbers of troops and civilian population" (S/1994/680, para. 28);

(c) The absolute air superiority and preponderant ground superiority of Turkey in Cyprus;

(d) The accentuated aggressive attitude exhibited by Turkey, culminating in the recent threatening statements by Turkish officials;

(e) The regular violation of the air space of Cyprus and the photographing of our defensive positions by the Turkish Air Force;

(f) The experience of the past when the Turkish Air Force bombed the towns and villages of Cyprus using napalm bombs.

The defensive intentions of my Government, with regard to the S-300 missile system, have been made very clear all along. Cyprus has repeatedly stressed that the system is in no way intended against any country or the Turkish Cypriots.

The undisputed proof of Cyprus' intentions lies in my proposal for the complete demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus made in November 1993 and which addresses the security concerns of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

The proposal, if accepted by Turkey, would remove the reason that necessitated the purchase of the missiles.

What is also particularly insulting in the letter is the attempt by Turkey to give lessons to other countries about their international obligations. The sale to Cyprus of the S-300 missile system and the joint defence doctrine fall within the rights of sovereign States in accordance with international law. Before Turkey embarks on accusations against other States, it should first

conform itself to the fundamental rules of international law governing inter-State behaviour, as well as the basic principles and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Before I conclude, allow me to point out that Turkey should be told to abandon its aggressive behaviour against the Republic of Cyprus and its intransigent position on the problem of Cyprus and focus its attention on the efforts exerted by you and supported by the international community, aimed at finding a comprehensive, just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions on Cyprus and the high-level agreements of 1977 and 1979. If Turkey is sincerely concerned with the security of the Turkish Cypriots and peace and security in the wider region, the key lies with it to remove the cause that threatens them by withdrawing its occupation forces and settlers from the Republic of Cyprus and accepting my proposal for demilitarization.

The Government of the Republic and the Greek Cypriot side are firmly committed to the settlement of the Cyprus problem by peaceful means and I wish to assure you, once again, that I shall continue to cooperate with you in a spirit of good will and do my utmost so that your efforts bring about the desired result, which will enable all Cypriots to live in peace and harmony.

(Signed) Glafcos CLERIDES
President of the
Republic of Cyprus